



“BE INVOLVED IN THE SHAPING OF YOUR LIVES. BE INVOLVED IN THE COUNTRY THAT YOU LIVE IN. YOU NEED NOT BE BYSTANDERS AND LET ADULTS TELL YOU WHAT TO DO. YOU HAVE A VOICE.”

“I went to law school because I wanted to do some good for the people I grew up around,” says Ryan Rusche. Ryan, who graduated from Carroll College and The University of Montana School of Law, is currently the County Attorney for Roosevelt County in Wolf Point. He is the first Tribal member to hold that position. Being a lawyer, he says, can be difficult. “You are basically interjecting yourself into other people’s lives, other people’s problems” he says, “and that is a challenge. I’m not an adversarial person but the practice of law is adversarial. We argue and fight in court...I was never raised to be an adversary...it’s been an adjustment.” Still, says Ryan, “it can be extremely rewarding because, as an attorney, you’re a problem solver, and often you can help the little person—the little guy, the little girl that is being picked on—and that’s a noble type of work.”

Ryan acknowledges that lawyers sometimes have bad reputations. “The television paints the picture of a lawyer in the same way it paints the picture of an Indian,” he says. “Neither stereotype is true. We provide a service to help people. We help them carry their problems when they aren’t able to carry their problems themselves.” In fact, the most satisfying cases, says Ryan, are “when through negotiation, we can find a workable agreement between people...where at the end of the day everyone is committed to doing their best for the people that live here.”

Besides his role as County Attorney, Ryan is the chair of the Montana Human Rights Commission, where he reviews complaints of alleged discrimination. He is also active in politics and served as a delegate to the 2008 Democratic Convention in Denver. “It’s an exciting time to be in the political arena,” he says. “It’s also a time when the media tends to focus on negative things, but there are a lot of wonderful things going on.”

It’s important, says Ryan, for young people to take part in the political process. “Pour your heart into it,” he advises. “But always be willing to listen to what the other side has to say. Be willing to change your mind.” Historically, says Ryan, young people have been the driving force in politics. “They were responsible for the various political revolutions the world over,” he says. “For a period there, that declined. It’s exciting to see them engaged again. Only good can come of that.”

“READING IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE BONDAGE THAT EXISTS EVERYWHERE IN OUR COUNTRY. IT’S THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE. IT’S THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET. IT’S A DOORWAY TO HAPPINESS AND A LIFETIME OF ENJOYMENT.”



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